

10. HOPE VALLEY EXPLORER

1. Purpose of the report

This report has two purposes

- i) To update Members on the operation of the Hope Valley Explorer in 2019 and the plans for 2020; and
- ii) to note the approach of a strengthening partnership model as we develop the service over the next two years.

Key Issues

- The Hope Valley Explorer (HVE) sustainable travel 'experience' was launched in July 2019. Stagecoach operated the HVE with two part branded buses operating a daily tour connecting the Hope Valley with Castleton (and its Caverns), Edale and the Fairholmes visitor centre.
- The HVE encouraged some 2,600 passenger journeys to be made by public transport in one of the most popular locations of the National Park and created considerable interest from a wide number of organisations and interest groups.
- Several organisations have areas of synergy in terms of their policies on sustainable travel, tourism and climate change and could benefit from the 'quick win' development potential of the HVE.
- Therefore discussions have begun to take place regarding a partnership approach, in particular the notion of joint stakeholder funding to ensure ongoing viability and development of the HVE concept. By taking this approach we hope to achieve a deeper level of support and ongoing development than might be possible otherwise.

2. Recommendations

Members are asked to note the proposed approach of strengthening partnership arrangements, including stakeholder financial support, for the future development of the Hope Valley Explorer.

How does this contribute to our policies and legal obligations?

3. The Hope Valley Explorer was developed from our Sustainable Transport Action Plan and contributes to sustainability objectives of both the National Park Management Plan and Core Strategy.
4. The HVE supports the delivery of the Corporate Strategy KPI's, in particular those related to Greater Audience Reach and Sustainable Travel. The HVE also builds on our Climate Change agenda and our approach to emergent programmes such as Recreation Hubs and Active Travel which aims to encourage visitors to come here by public transport instead of by car, or at the very least immediately switch to sustainable travel options when they arrive.

Background Information

5. At the RMM meeting on 5th February 2019 David Marsden, Transport Policy Officer, presented an update on the business case for the Edale Explorer tourism travel product, a seasonal visitor tour bus with a circular route based around Edale (Agenda Item 7/19). RMM agreed to support the progression of an invitation to tender for the Edale Explorer

(subsequently 'rebranded' the Hope Valley Explorer, as part of an enhanced marketing package).

6. A Tender for the Edale Explorer with a 'kick start' subsidy value of £33K was open from 29 March to 25 April 2019; two tender submissions were received. The tender panel determined that bus operator Stagecoach (whose price included two buses, an innovative timetable and the option to extend the route to include the Fairholmes visitor centre) offered the best value package for the Authority. The route would tour the Edale Valley, the Hope Valley and the Upper Derwent valley.
7. The Hope Valley Explorer operated from 21 July to 31 August 2019. A range of Marketing support was provided by the Authority (and by Stagecoach), with leaflets, posters, social media and an on-board commentary playing a part (for examples of passenger feedback see Appendix 1).
8. The Hope Valley Explorer in 2019 acted as a pilot operation. Performance was reasonably promising, with some 2,600 passenger journeys made. The public feedback was very positive on the whole; in particular people valued the provision of an audio commentary helping them to appreciate the local area.
9. The Hope Valley Explorer has the potential to develop and strengthen the delivery of key sustainable travel and tourism outcomes for the Authority.
10. The HVE represents part of our programme of sustainable travel delivery projects. Other potential 'quick wins' in this field include the completion of the link between the White Peak Loop and the Monsal Trail. Our current body of policy work regarding Recreation Hubs may suggest other initiatives, including other 'Explorer' type routes.

Proposals

11. The Hope Valley Explorer would not happen without the commitment and leadership of the Authority. We wish to retain the Hope Valley Explorer as primarily a National Park product – so not to lose that sense of place and promoting our special qualities. However we also have a great desire to develop the concept of the Hope Valley Explorer and work with partners to achieve common aims.
12. The future development of the HVE will be strengthened by a partnership arrangement, with stakeholder financial support from a range of organisations. In fact this has already started to take effect, for example an early 'in principle' offer of support has been received from Derbyshire Dales District Council.
13. A further benefit from the stakeholder approach would be to enhance and extend the reach of marketing for the Hope Valley Explorer through partner channels, in particular through digital media.

One potential stakeholder has proposed they wish to explore providing support, including finance, to extend the period of operation of the Hope Valley Explorer to also include weekends that fall within British Summer Time (Easter to October).

Therefore we propose elected members acknowledge and promote the partnership / stakeholder approach.

Are there any corporate implications members should be concerned about?

Financial:

14. The Hope Valley Explorer has a committed three year (2019-2021) kick-start fund from the Policy and Communities Service budget, and work is ongoing to develop a

commercial model to ensure future financial sustainability.

Risk Management:

15. The success of the Hope Valley Explorer (HVE) may be dependent on achieving good growth in passenger numbers in order to reach a point of commercial viability for the service operator. A key aim of the HVE is for the service to work hand in hand with the PDNPA 'brand' to achieve sustainable travel and tourism outcomes. The proposed move towards gaining contributions and commitment from HVE stakeholders will help to reduce the risk of early failure of the HVE due to variance in its path towards financial viability. The operational Risk Management for the Hope Valley Explorer is an undertaking by Stagecoach.

Sustainability:

16. The Hope Valley Explorer supports the Authority's sustainability agenda, particularly promoting sustainable travel and tourism.

Equality:

17. There are no significant equality issues.

18. **Background papers (not previously published)**

None

19. **Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Passenger and operational feedback

Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date

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